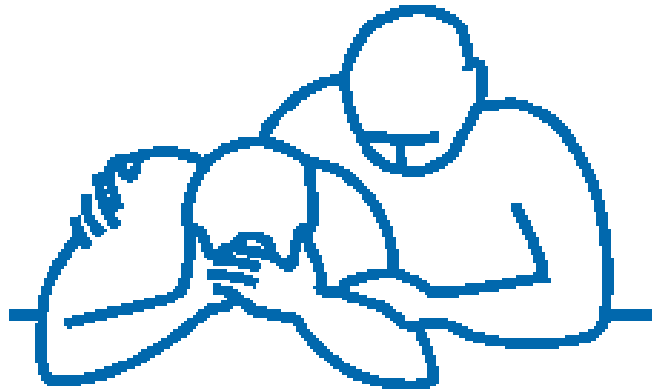


Amen Support Services Ltd. Annual Report 2011



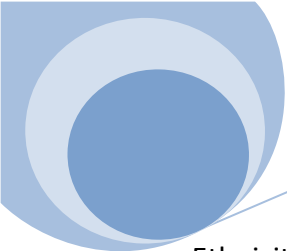
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Amen Support Services Ltd. is part funded by the HSE

Amen Support Services Ltd, Company Registered in Ireland 489263
Directors: Eugene Wogan, Finola O'Sullivan

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Chairperson/Director's Report

I am delighted and proud to present the third annual report of Amen Support Services Ltd. The report details the services and support provided by Amen Support Services Ltd. throughout the previous year and, I hope, serves to highlight the difficult and often desperate situations faced by the Male Victims of domestic abuse who contact and avail of our services.

In the current, difficult, economic climate funding to many voluntary service providers has been severely cut and Amen Support Services Ltd. has not been immune to these cuts. It is therefore a tribute to the dedication and hard work of our staff and volunteers that we have continued to provide a high level of service to the many thousands of men, their friends and families, who contact us. I would like, therefore, to thank and pay tribute to our staff and volunteers.

Despite many published and well documented studies (e.g. Watson & Parsons, ESRI, Melissa Corbally et al.) which show that domestic abuse is a problem affecting men and women, children and the elderly and all races and sectors of society, the stereotype of an abusive man and a female victim is still prevalent in the media, and in the attitudes of many government and family services. This can have a direct and detrimental effect on many men who find themselves victims of domestic abuse. Amen Support Services Ltd. has done much to highlight the plight of these forgotten victims and to redress the balance of the societal stereotypes. Nevertheless, much remains to be done.

I am happy to note that, during the previous year, Amen Support Services Ltd. has become a member of the National Steering Committee for Violence against Men. It is hoped that this Committee, chaired by Cosc, and the Commission for the Victims of Crime, will help to co-ordinate and engender a pluralistic, gender-neutral attitude to victims along with the equivalent committee for violence against women. Despite the opinions constantly voiced by what appear to be 'vested interests', domestic abuse is not a gender issue. Domestic abuse is an issue affecting Men, Women and Children of all ages, races and creeds. Amen Support Services Ltd. is proud to be in the front line supporting victims of domestic abuse.

As chairperson of the voluntary National Executive Committee of Amen Support Services, I have some very large shoes to fill and I would like to thank my predecessors, David Ring and Mary Cleary for their help and example throughout the years.

I commend this report to you

Sincerely,

Eugene Wogan,

Director

Staff Members:

Niamh Farrell	Manager
Sandra Kelly	Support Worker
Aoife McGrath	Support Worker
Kate Markey	Clerical Officer

National Executive Committee / Board of Directors 2011:

David Ring	Chairperson & Director
Eugene Wogan	Vice – Chairperson & Director
Michael Power	Treasurer
Finola O’Sullivan	Secretary
Donal Geraghty	Committee Member
Gerry Shanahan	Committee Member
Nicola Dowling	Committee Member

Activities in 2011

2011 was a busy year for Amen Support Services Ltd. Despite the current economic crisis that we as a nation find ourselves in, the staff of Amen Support Services Ltd. have endeavoured to provide a high quality service to service users.

Media Interviews:

During 2011, representatives from Amen Support Services Ltd. conducted a total of 33 media interviews. These included interviews on local, regional and national radio stations as well as local and national newspapers. The aim of these interviews was to highlight the issue of domestic abuse against men whilst also informing people of the vital services Amen Support Services Ltd. provide. Amen Support Services Ltd. received a large number of contacts to the service as a result of these interviews and printed articles. Amen Support Services Ltd. would also like to thank the clients who spoke to media throughout the year.

Fair City:

In late 2009, Amen Support Services Ltd. was approached by the writers of Fair City to aid in the development of their story between fictional husband and wife, Damien and Suzanne Halpin. To ensure an accurate portrayal of the violence, the writers were in continuous contact with the Manager and Support Workers in the office.

Representatives from Amen Support Services Ltd. spoke with Maclean Burke (Damien) and other cast and crew members of Fair City, to give them an insight into the effects that domestic abuse has on a man. Although this storyline began transmission in 2010, it continued to air throughout early 2011. During this period, Amen Support Services Ltd. noticed an increase in contacts to the service and an amplified interest from other media sources, such as national and local radio stations as well as newspapers.



Outreach Service:

Spring 2011; saw Amen Support Services Ltd. opening its first outreach clinic. This is great resource for men, who are unable to attend the office in Navan, Meath. The outreach service takes place every Tuesday in Dolphin House, Family Law District Court Office, Dublin 2 from 10am to 4pm. During this time, an Amen Support Services Ltd. Support Worker is available to speak with clients and provide information relating to their situation.

Awareness Campaign:

"Domestic Abuse Hits Men Too"

From October 3rd to October 16th 2011 Amen Support Services Ltd. ran the third annual awareness campaign to highlight domestic abuse against men. The aim of the 'Domestic Abuse Hits Men Too' awareness campaign was to encourage men to come forward and let them know that Amen Support Services Ltd. is there to help and assure male victims that they do not have to suffer in silence. The campaign was extremely successful and an increase in contacts to the service during this period was recorded.



Presentations:

During 2011, representatives from Amen Support Services Ltd. delivered a total of 24 presentations. Presentations were mainly delivered to secondary school students as part of the SPHE module. However a large number of presentations were also given to colleges and other organisations such as HSE social workers and community groups.

Health Promotion Evening:

Amen Support Services Ltd. ran a Men's Health Promotion Evening in September 2011. The aim of the evening was to highlight the need for men to be mindful of their health and to raise awareness of the various health issues that can affect men. This evening included presentations from The Irish Heart Foundation, The Marie Keating Foundation and Meath Community Drug & Alcohol Response as well as a representative being available for questions from the Health Promotion Unit of HSE North East. Information leaflets and booklets on heart disease, blood pressure cancer, physical activity, healthy eating, stopping smoking, mental health and domestic abuse were available. Attendees on the night were given the chance to avail of free blood pressure and smokers were invited to have a carbon monoxide breath test.

National Steering Committee for Violence against Men:

The first meeting of The National Steering Committee for Violence against Men was held in December 2011. The committee comprises of non - Governmental Organisations (NGO's) operating nationally on issues relating to violence against men as well as statutory agencies. The committee chaired by Cosc (The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual & Gender Based Violence) will meet quarterly. Amen Support Services Ltd. believe that this is a landmark development and acknowledges state recognition of the issue of violence against men.

Presentation to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence & Equality

On October 5th 2011, a representative from Amen Support Services Ltd. presented the issues facing male victims of domestic abuse to Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice, Defence & Equality. The Joint Oireachtas Committee on Defence, Justice and Equality Committee is a forum for



members of both houses of the Oireachtas from all parties to have a meaningful input into key legislation and policy areas which have real significance. The committee plays a major role in helping to shape opinion and policy in the fields of justice, security, the rule of law, equality, defence and immigration to ensure that Irish society is safe, secure, just, open-minded and impartial. Amen Support Services Ltd. Were honoured to present to the committee and believe it is a significant recognition of the difficulties that male victims of domestic abuse face.

Family Law Seminar:

In January 2011, Amen Support Services Ltd. held a Family Law Seminar with solicitor Donna Kerrigan. Over 20 men attended on the night and had questions answered directly from a solicitor at no cost to them. Donna delivered a presentation on many aspects of family law including the Domestic Violence Act, access, maintenance, custody and legal separation. One man said *"I thought it was interesting listening to everyone and their situations. I really learned a lot"*.

Staff Training:

Throughout the year, Amen Support Service Ltd. Staff have completed several training courses in order to further enhance their skills. In April, all staff successfully completed SAFETalk Training. This training is a suicide awareness training programme available through the HSE Suicide Prevention Resource Offices. Since completing the Safe Talk training, both support workers have successfully completed ASIST Training. The ASIST course trains participants to reduce the immediate risk of a suicide and increase the support for a person at risk. Staff also completed training courses on, amongst others, mental health, sexual health and drug and alcohol awareness in conjunction with HSE North East and Meath Community Drug and Alcohol Response.



“Voices” – Short Film:

Voices, by Gerry Shanahan is a short film focusing on the anguish that a man suffering from domestic abuse faces. Gerry Shanahan spoke to Niamh Farrell, Manager in order to accurately portray the character of a victim of domestic abuse. ‘Voices’ has won a total of three awards from five nominations at the prestigious Underground Cinema Awards in Dun Laoghaire including best actor for Una Kavanagh, Best Director for Cathal Nally and Gerry Shanahan received the award for Best Screenplay. Director, Cathal Nally, also picked up Best director award for ‘Voices’ at the Ballinamore International Film Festival in 2011.



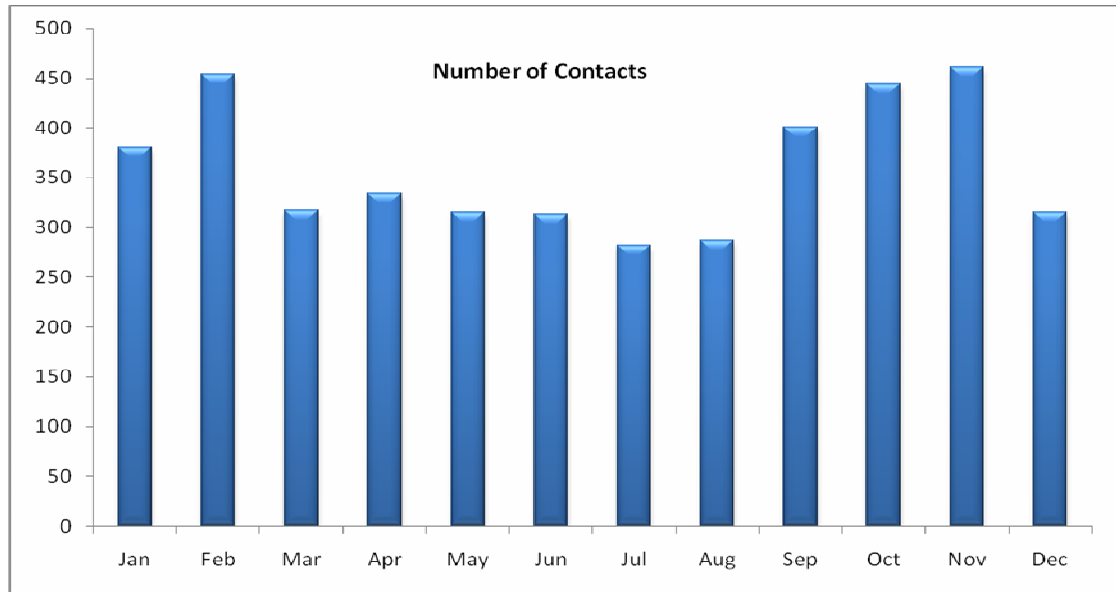
Student Research

As an organisation Amen Support Services Ltd. are committed to ongoing research into domestic abuse. Dr. Catherine Bates, project co-ordinator of the Students Learning with Communities Initiative in Dublin Institute of Technology (D.I.T.) and Amen Support Services Ltd. are currently facilitating DIT post graduate masters in Public Relations students to conduct research into devising a domestic violence campaign for a target audience of 18 - 25 year olds. This research is expected to be completed in 2012.

Key changes to Domestic Violence Legislation

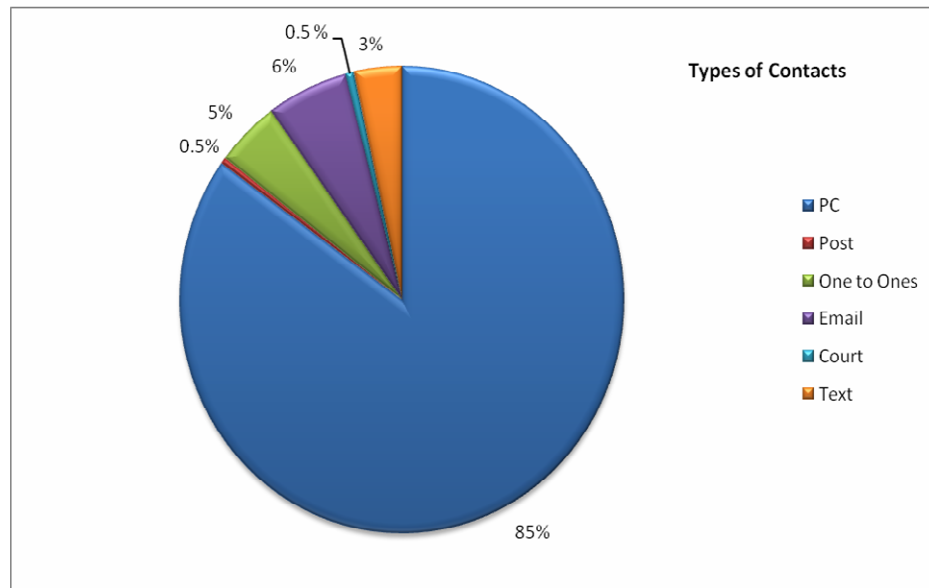
In August, the much needed changes to the Domestic Violence Act 1996 enabled men who were previously ineligible to access the protection of a Safety Order. The key amendment to the Act addressed a gap in legal protection and enabled men with a child in common with an abusive partner whom they are not married to, among others who had previously been excluded to seek protection under the Domestic Violence Act.

Annual Statistics 2011

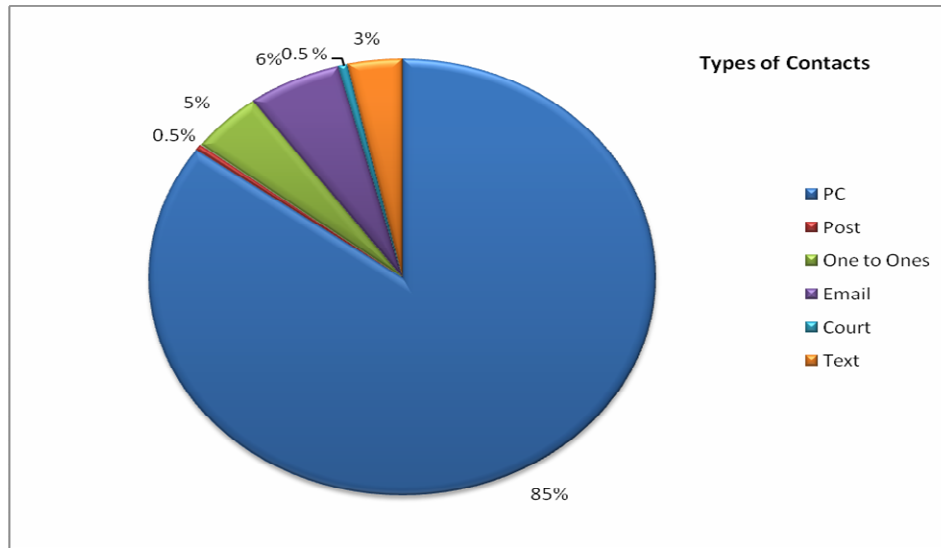


Number of contacts received each month in 2011

2011 was once again, a busy year for Amen Support Services Ltd. Services were in high demand. In total there was 4303 contacts to the service during the twelve month period of January 2011 to December 2011. Contacts to the service are defined as any communication a client has with a representative from Amen Support Services Ltd. Contacts to the service include calls to the helpline, one to ones with a support worker, court accompaniments, emails, post received and text messages to the service. As outlined in the graph above, the busiest month for the service was February with a total of 454 contacts. Following the “Domestic Abuse Hits Men Too” Awareness Campaign, a dramatic increase in contacts to the service was reported in October 2011 with 444 contacts to the service.



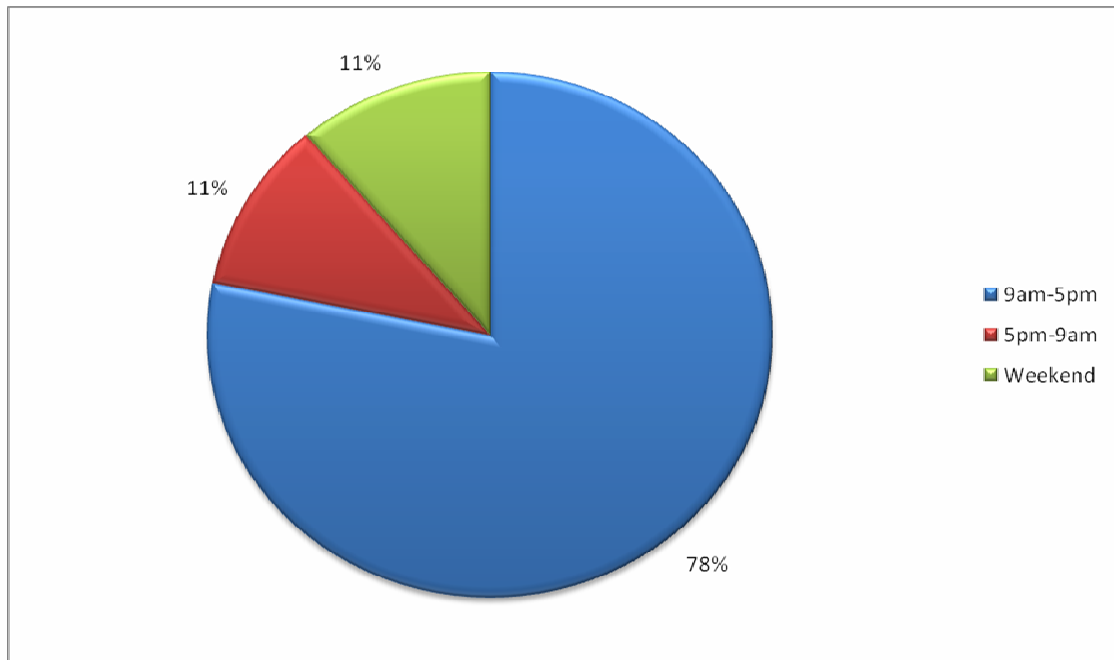
Services provided to clients



As with in previous years, the Amen Support Services Ltd.'s helpline continues to be the main source of contacts to the service. Over the range of services provided by the organisation, Support Workers deal with both male victims of domestic abuse aswell as concerned family members and friends on a daily basis. During the contacts to the service, support workers speak with the service users in order to assess their individual situation and in turn provide them with the information suited to these needs. Support workers discuss the options available to the services and will provide them with information on the legal remedies that may be available to them, if appropriate.

Apart from the helpline, other services available to clients include one to one meetings in the office in Navan, Co. Meath and also the outreach clinic in Dolphin House, Dublin, weekly support group meetings, the court accompaniment service and a limited counselling service.

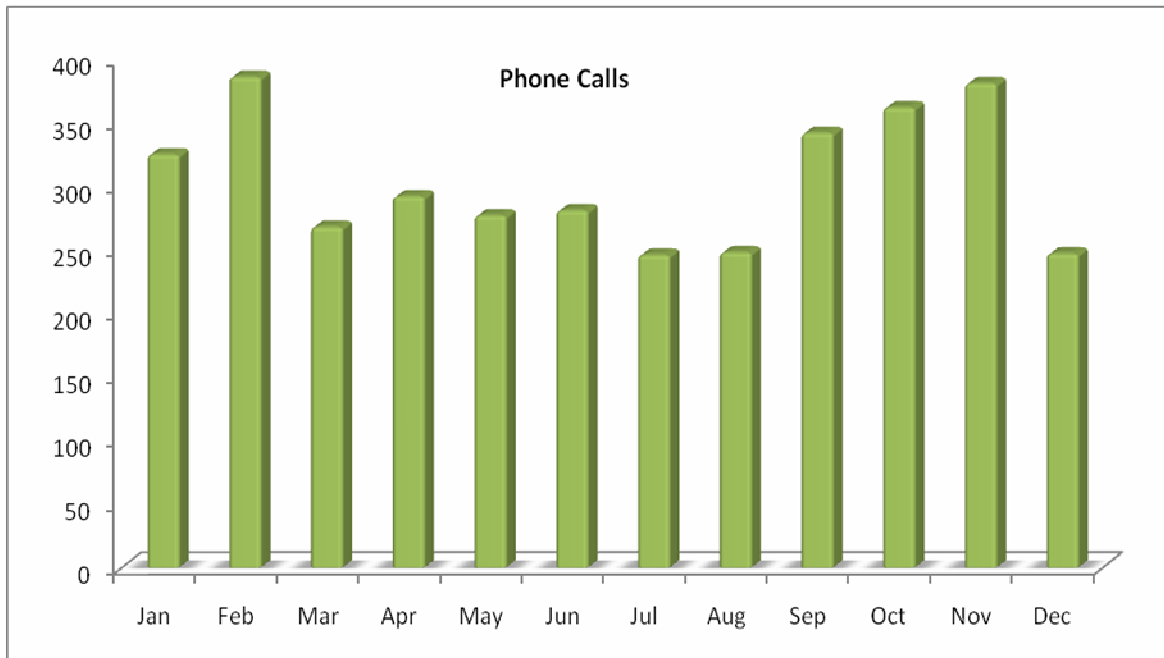
Time of Contacts



78% of contacts to the service were made during operating hours of 9am to 5pm. While the majority of contacts with the service occurred during office hours there was still a high quantity of contacts recorded during the time period of 5pm – 9am and over the course of weekends.

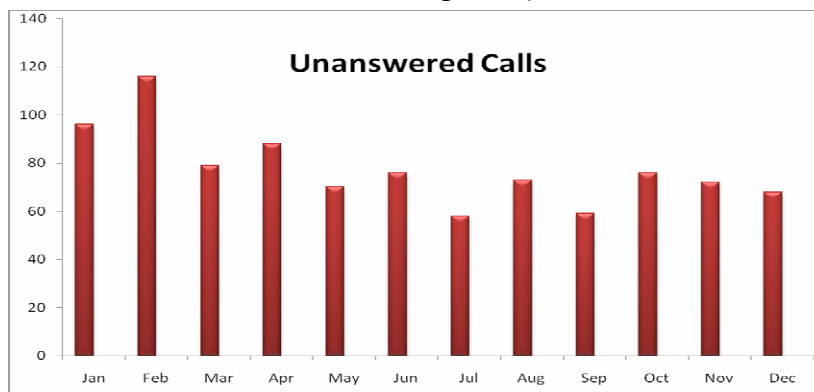
The Helpline

Amen Support Services Ltd. operates a confidential helpline, which runs Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm. In 2011 there was 4303 contacts to the service of which 3655 were phone calls. The helpline continues to be the main source of contact for service users to make contact with a representative of the organisation. The out of hours services which had been available in 2010 was suspended due to funding constraints. On the helpline, support workers hear, not only from male victims of domestic abuse but also from concerned family members and friends of the victim including sisters, mothers, fathers, work colleagues, neighbours and friends. As in line with overall figures for the year, the helpline was busiest during the months of February and October. In February 2011, the services busiest month of the year, a total of 386 calls were made to the helpline.

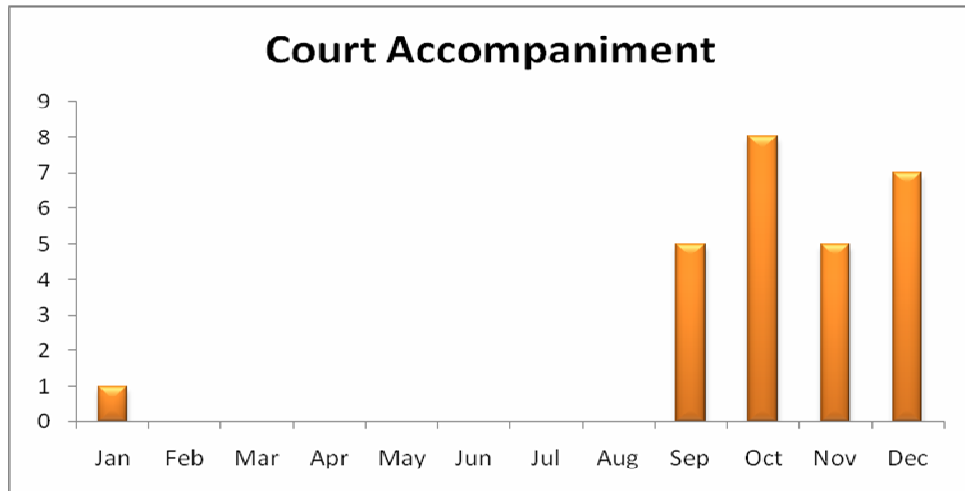


Unanswered Calls

During 2011, 931 calls went unanswered. This figure has significantly decreased from the figure reported in 2010 (1378 calls went unanswered during 2010).

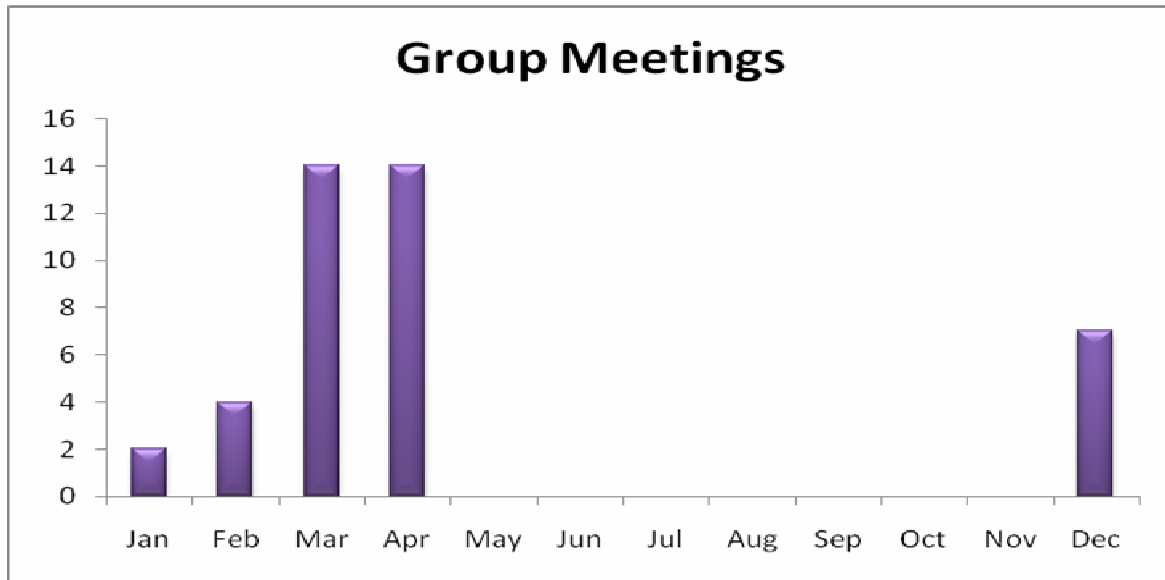


Court Accompaniment



Due to funding constraints in 2011, the court accompaniment service was suspended for a time. However, thankfully, funding was provided later in the year and Amen Support Services Ltd. was able to provide clients with court accompaniment. The Court Accompanier employed by Amen Support Services, meets with clients in court and aids them in making court applications and often acts as moral support for a male victim during the court appearances for family law matters. A total of 26 court accompaniments were provided in 2011. These accompaniments were for a variety of reasons including applications for Protection and Safety Orders, hearings for orders under the Domestic Violence Act 1996 as well as for hearings for guardianship, access & custody.

Support Group Meetings



Unfortunately due to funding constraints, Amen Support Services Ltd. were unable to provide support through weekly support group meetings on a continuous basis throughout 2011. However, two very successful programmes of support group meetings were ran during the year. Once again in 2011, the support group meetings focused on emotional support and ran over a 10 week period with a different theme covered each week. Most men who join the group have no prior experience of a support group. Members of the group share a variety of life experiences, including unemployment, marital and relationship break down, depression, addiction etc. Their experience, though unique, has probably been encountered in some form by other members of the group.

Each week the member's sense of confidence, coping skills, personal growth and development were enhanced.

The members shared from their life experiences which gave meaningful and insightful understanding into how they are coping with ongoing difficult issues in their lives.

Types of Abuse

Men contacting Amen Support Services Ltd. speak about a variety of incidents of abuse that they have suffered at the hands of their female partners or wives. These incidents often include physical, emotional, psychological, verbal and sexual abuse.

In recent years, Amen Support Services Ltd. have noticed a dramatic increase in the numbers of men falsely accused of causing harm to their partner or to their children. This can be extremely damaging to the man's mental health and will most definitely impact on the relationship he shares with his children.

Domestic abuse can be damaging in a number of ways. Many men speak of the lingering impact that psychological scars can have. Psychological and emotional abuse can cause men to have low self-esteem resulting in them becoming detached from their friends, family and work.

Incidents of Abuse:

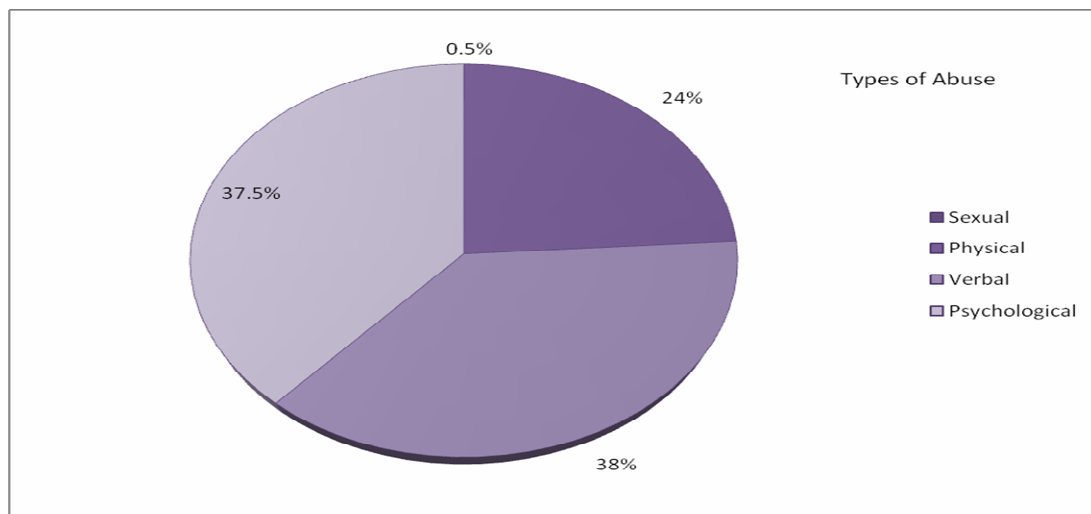
Physical Abuse: stabbing, hitting, punching, black eyes, biting, cigarette burns, etc.

Verbal/Psychological Abuse: Turning the children against him, not allowing him to see his family or friends, constantly wanting to know where he is, not allowing him to eat or sleep properly, criticising him, calling him names, making verbal threats or allegations against him, etc.

Financial Abuse: Giving him a small weekly allowance, not contributing to household bills, demanding his wages, not allowing him access to his bank account, withholding his ATM card, applying for large loans in joint names without his consent, running up large credit card bills etc.

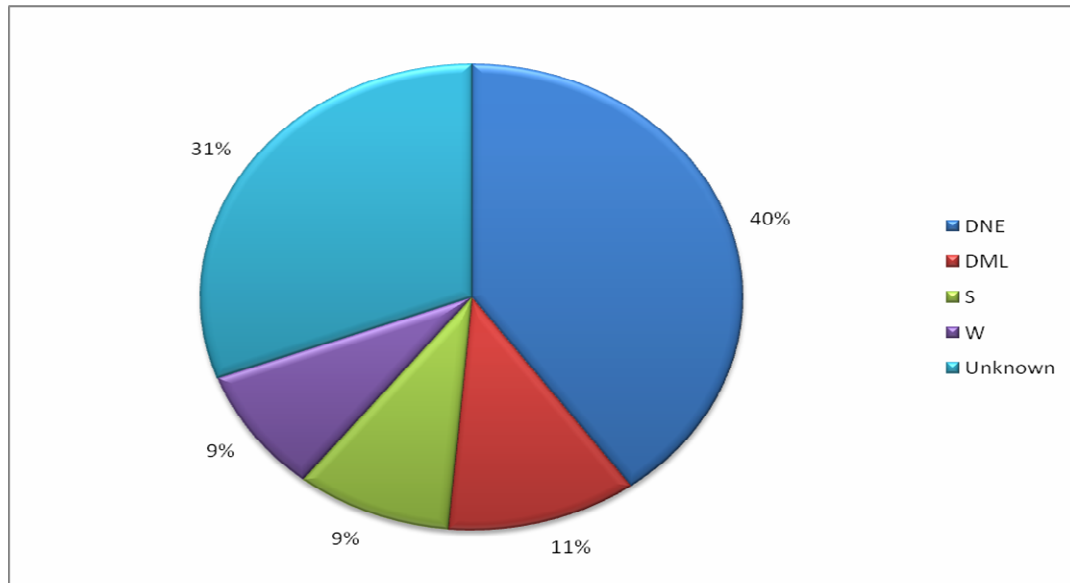
"A letter had arrived from my solicitor. I left the letter in the kitchen. When I came downstairs, I was questioned about it and accused of hiding things from her. I pointed out that if I was hiding it, I wouldn't have left the letter in the open. She proceeded to push me into the corner of the kitchen. She went on to slap me in the face and hit me. She picked up her handbag and hit me repeatedly with it on the side of the head. Our two children were looking at this. I did nothing" Keith

"I have a pressurised job but I manage to work from home so I do more than my fair share in terms of minding the children, school runs, homework, housework etc, but she's never happy. She doesn't work outside the home and not a lot in the home for that matter. She doesn't wash for me, cook for me and our sex life is non-existent. I have been living in misery for over 12 years." Sean



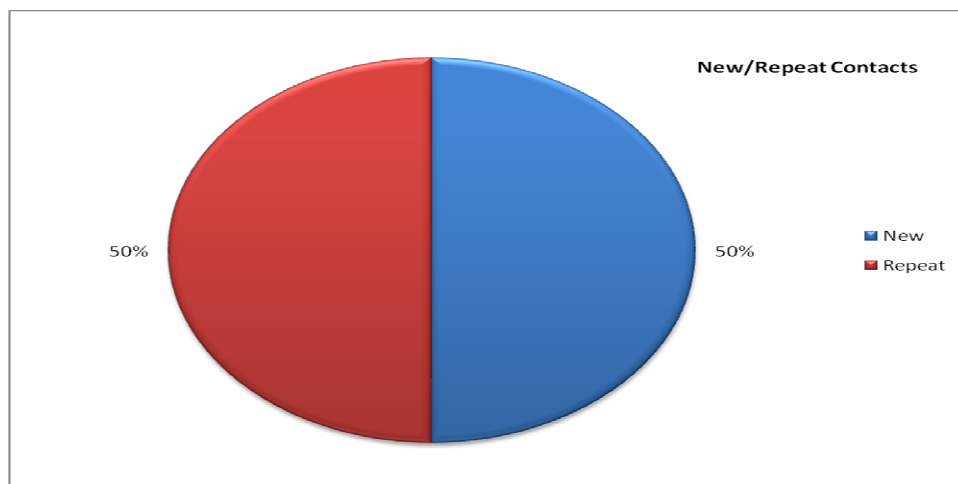
This chart details the abuse disclosed by callers to the helpline. Many clients experience more than one type of abuse. Over 75% of callers to the helpline have experienced verbal and psychological abuse combined.

Location of client



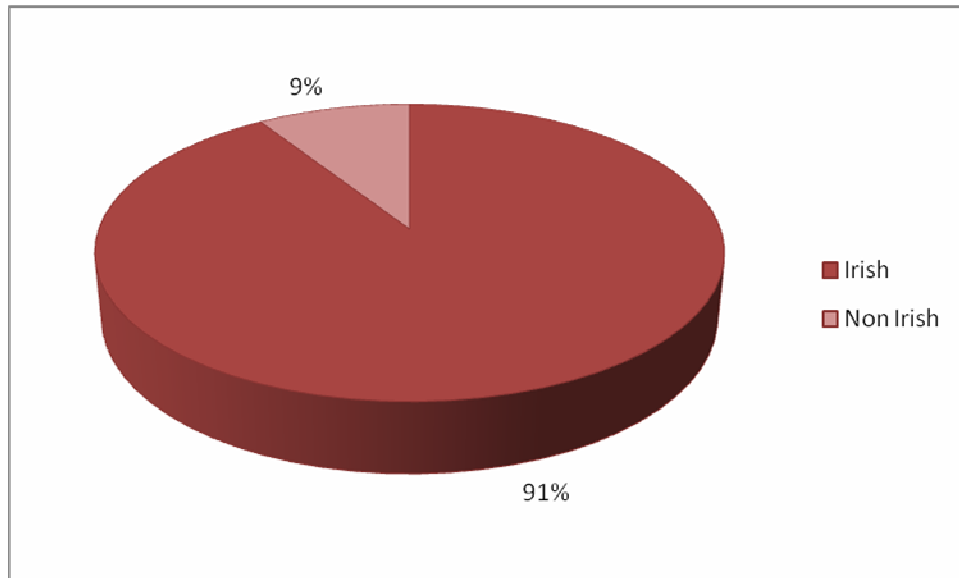
Whilst the remit for Amen Support Services Ltd. is the HSE region of Dublin North East, Amen Support Services Ltd. is the only HSE funded helpline service for male victims of domestic abuse in Ireland and therefore, the organisation receives contacts from all across the country and on occasion from callers abroad, including calls from countries such as France, Germany and Nigeria.

Repeat and first time contacts with Amen Support Services Ltd.

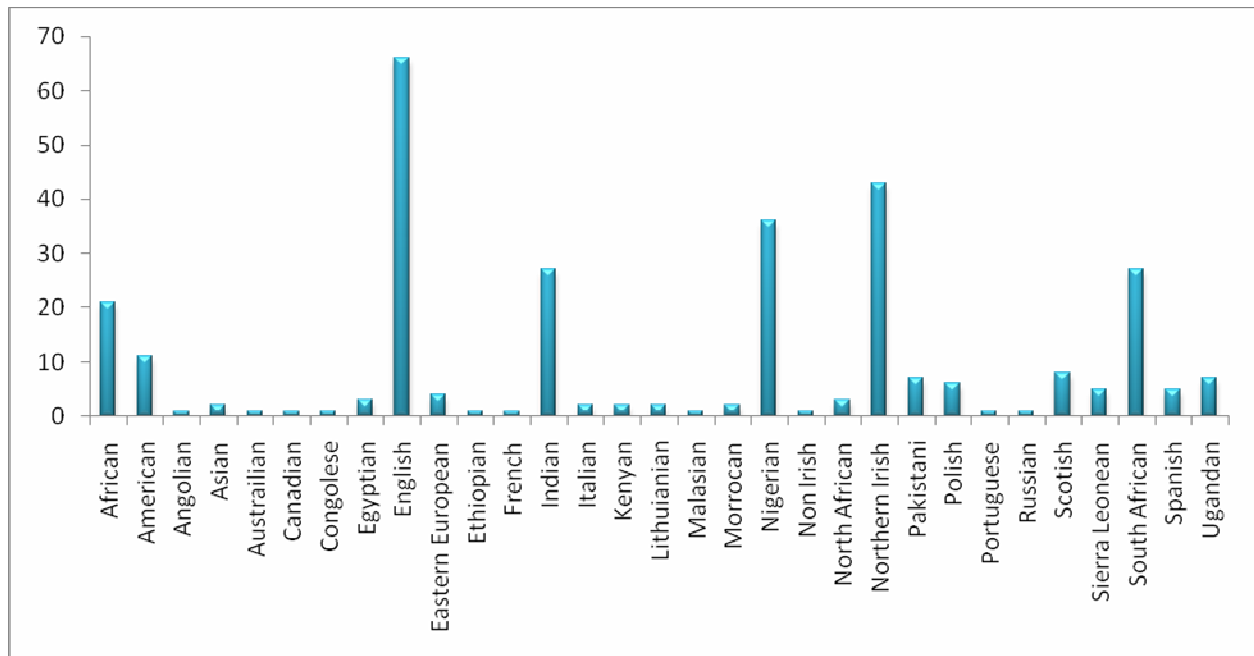


The graph highlights the fact that in 2011, Amen Support Services Ltd. received an equal number of contacts from both new and repeat clients

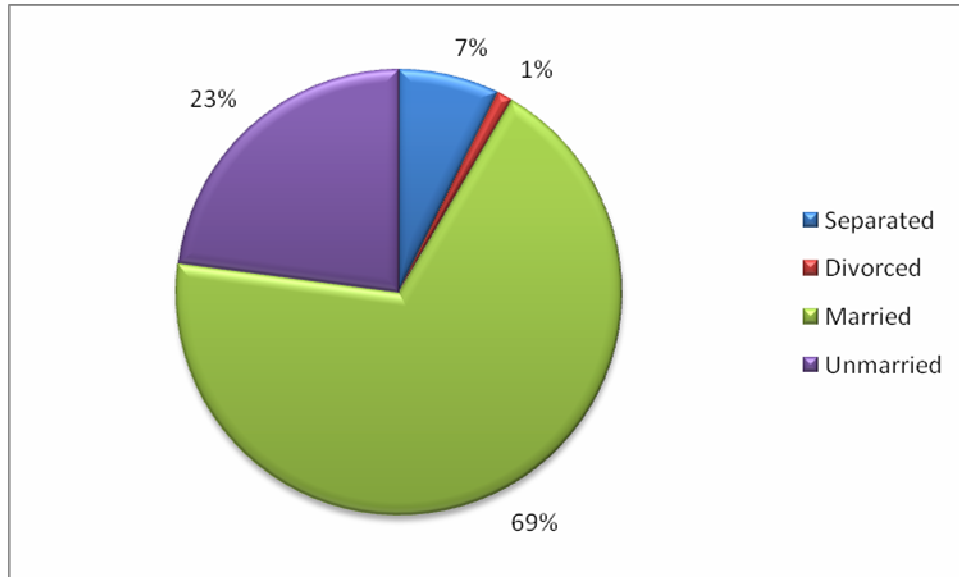
Ethnicity of clients



91% of the contacts to Amen Support Services Ltd. were from Irish Nationals, with 9% of contact from non Irish nationals, a breakdown below shows the 9%. The amount of contacts from Non – Irish service users has increased by 2% during the period from 2010 to 2011.



Relationship Status

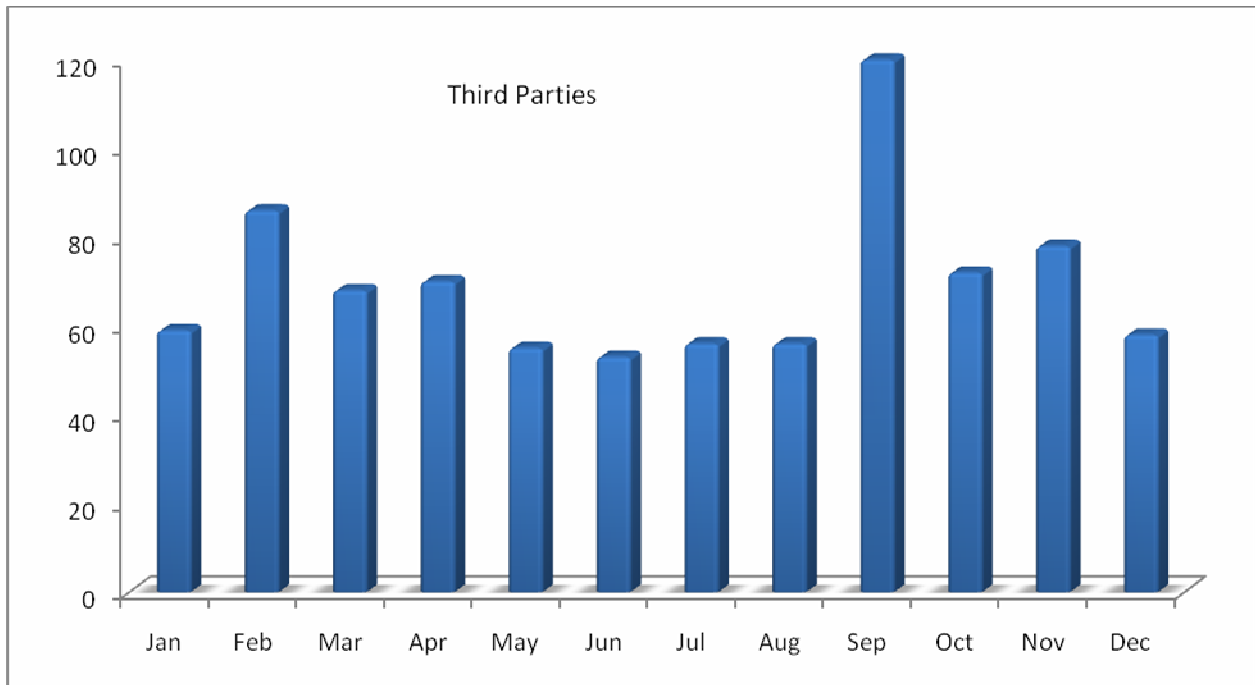


Amen Support Services Ltd. found that 69% of the men who contacted the helpline were married. These married men were both living with and living apart from their wives and children. The contacts recorded as separated are those who have been granted a legal separation through the Circuit Court or through the mediation process. 23% of contacts to the service reported to be unmarried. As over the past number of years, a considerably low number of service users reported to be divorced. In 2011, only 1% of contacts to the service were divorced.

Following observation on statistics recorded, Amen Support Services Ltd. can report that 31% (107 contacts) of clients that contact the helpline are legally separated from their wives. 35% (679 contacts) of contacts received are from victims who were at the time married and living with their wives. 23% of contacts received were from unmarried people. Only 1% of all contacts to the organisation were from people who were divorced.

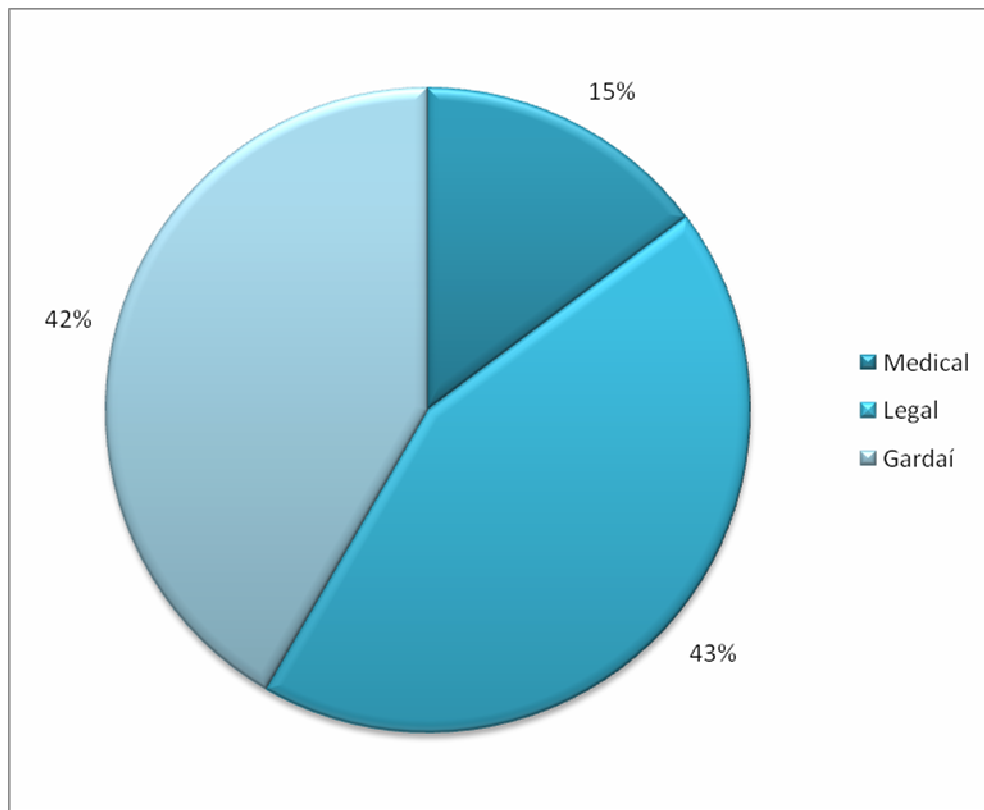
38% of clients (1637 contacts) disclosed during the course of their contact with Amen Support Services Ltd. that they have children.

Third Parties



During 2011, Amen Support Services Ltd. not only heard from male victims of domestic abuse but also from their concerned family and friends. 831 contacts were received from third parties in 2011. These includes contacts from concerned mothers, sisters, brothers, fathers, distant relatives, family friends, neighbours and work colleagues.

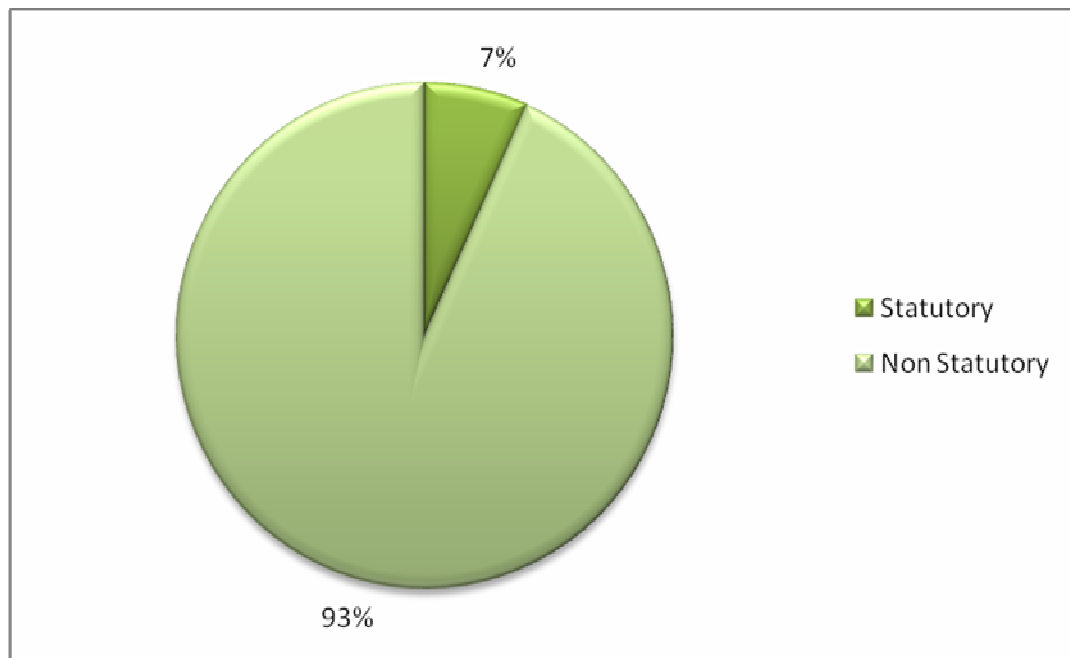
Service Users contact with other agencies before contacting Amen Support Services Ltd.



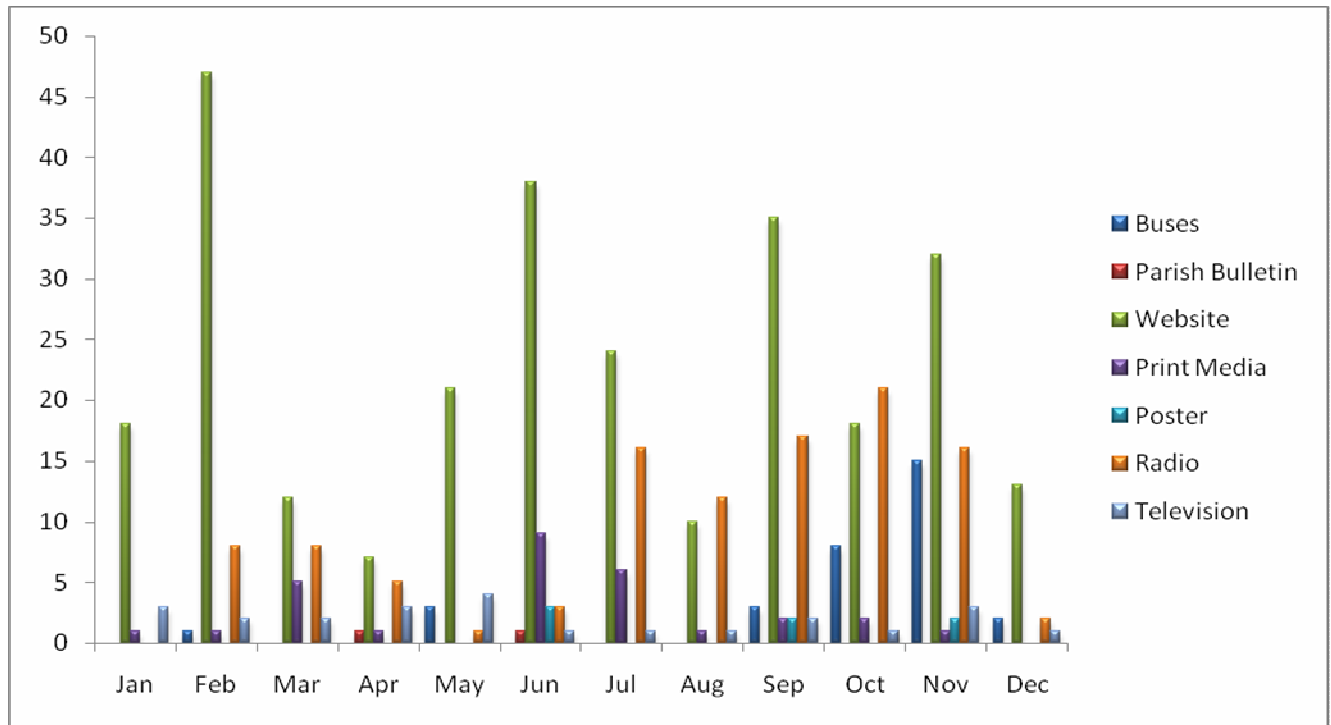
Whilst speaking with support workers, clients to the service are asked if they have spoken to members of the legal or medical profession as well as members of An Garda Síochána. A total of 1122 service users mentioned that they had spoken to one or more of the listed agencies before their contact with Amen Support Services Ltd. This figure represents 26.07% of contacts. 15% or 166 contacts spoke to members of the medical profession about their experiences. 43% or 489 contacts spoke to solicitors or other members of the legal profession and 42% or 467 services users reported their experiences of abuse to An Garda Síochána.

Referrals

During the course of their contact with Amen Support Services Ltd. all clients are asked how they heard about the service or how they first became aware of the service.

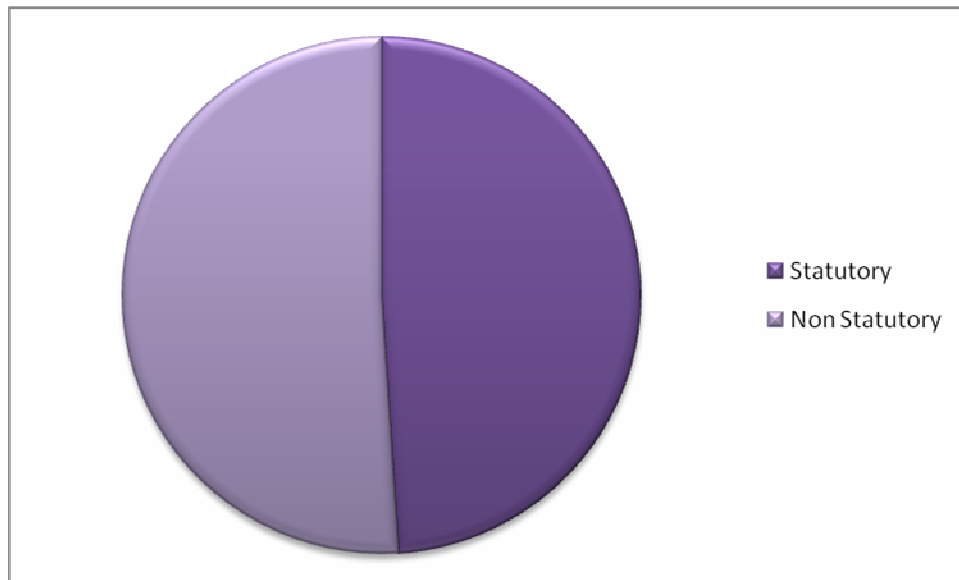


7% of the callers to the helpline in 2011 were referred to Amen Support Services Ltd. by a statutory agency. Statutory agencies include An Garda Siochana, HSE employees such as social workers, psychologists, nurses, etc. The figure of 7% is an increase of 2% from the figure recorded in 2010. 93% of callers were referred from other sources including media coverage, internet, word of mouth etc.



Non – Statutory Referrals

As with previous years, the Amen Support Services Ltd. website has been the main source of information about the service for clients. As mentioned previously, Amen Support Service Ltd. ran a very successful awareness campaign in October 2011. Advertisements were placed on the back panels of Dublin Buses, in print Media such as local and national newspapers and on local and national radio stations. Despite the awareness campaign being ran solely for a limited time throughout October, Amen Support Services Ltd. continued to receive contacts to the service as a result of the campaign for several months after. Radio interviews were also conducted throughout the year and a large number of contacts to the service are often received following a media interview or exposure of the service in some form. Also, on a continuous basis throughout the year, Amen Support Services Ltd. send out notifications to parish bulletins or parish newsletters raising awareness of the existence of the service. This is a cost effective method of advertising as there is no cost associated. Television interviews continue to be an excellent source of advertising for Amen Support Services Ltd. Once again this is a cost effective method of advertising and making people aware of the service. As highlighted earlier, the domestic abuse storyline in the RTE soap opera Fair City was hugely beneficial to Amen Support Services Ltd. Following the broadcast of an incident of domestic abuse, RTE provided viewers with the Amen Support Services Ltd. helpline number in order for them to seek support should they need so. The graph above shows the main sources from which services users became aware of the work of Amen Support Services Ltd.



It is often appropriate and necessary for support workers to suggest to a client during the course of their contact that it may be beneficial for them to speak to other agencies. In 2011, service users were given details of both statutory and non statutory agencies including An Garda Siochana, the Courts Service, HSE, the clients GP, Citizen Information Centres, Legal Aid Board, counsellors and psychotherapists or other support groups which may be of benefit to the client and their individual needs. In 2011, a total of 877 referrals were given to statutory agencies and 914 to non statutory agencies.

Note on data collected

The information relates to details and facts disclosed by clients in the process of their contact with Amen Support Services Ltd. The aim of Amen Support Services Ltd. is to provide support and information to male victims of domestic abuse. Only partial information is available to Amen Support Services Ltd. on the majority of men, in relation to the extent of abuse being experienced and the barriers and obstacles to help-seeking.

Amen Support Services Ltd. operates in line with the Children First Guidelines which callers and clients are made aware of if disclosing child abuse.